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NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER
A CONCEPT PAPER ON SENIOR TRANSPORTATION

The Need for Senior Transportation Services

There is a tremendous increase in the need for transportation services for senior citizens. While older adults largely utilize private cars for transportation, as they age the majority will lose the physical and/or financial capacity to drive or maintain a car. The availability of transportation becomes even more of an issue as individuals advance into their 70s and 80s. Data from the 2000 census showed that 35 million Americans, or 12.4 percent of the total U.S. population, were over the age of 65, and almost 4.5 million (or 1.6 percent of the total population) were over age 85. By 2030, the number of older Americans will more than double with nine million over age 85 and one in every 11 Americans falling into this age group.

Most of these senior citizens rely on and will continue to utilize family, friends or public and private transportation to access services and participate in social and recreational events in their communities. Unfortunately, accessing necessary transportation services is difficult for most elderly, particularly for those who live in either suburban or rural communities where destinations are too far to walk, public transit is non-existent or poor, and private transportation, if available, is limited and often prohibitively expensive. There are estimates that the unmet need for senior transportation services amounts to \$1 billion per year. Many older adults are reluctant to rely on friends and family even for their most essential transportation needs - access to health and social services - and the result is often increasing isolation and deterioration in health and quality of life.

National Technical Assistance Center

A National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) will foster innovative solutions that create greater access to senior transportation. NTAC's well-trained staff will work with teams from local communities to teach them how to look at their community, identify where they are successfully meeting the transportation needs of seniors and where there are gaps in service, gather all of the relevant stakeholders, create and plan how to develop an integrated senior transportation program, and implement the program. This approach leaves communities with all of the necessary tools to continue to create solutions as other issues arise and as the needs of seniors change. The NTAC will work in collaboration with the Federal Transit Administration and the Administration on Aging.

The NTAC will perform many services to local communities, some of which include the following:

- Gather best practices to disseminate to local communities starting their own senior transportation programs;

- Provide a web site to publicize and circulate information on senior transportation programs;
- Provide an 800 line to answer questions about senior transportation, direct calls to additional resources, and help local communities obtain best practices;
- Distribute a newsletter, which offers the latest information on senior transportation. This will be a resource for transportation news, publications, research, and upcoming trainings and conferences;
- Serve as a clearinghouse for print, video and audio resources on the senior population and senior mobility;
- Provide resources on how to locate financial resources to pay for senior transportation services;
- Train transportation providers in terms of curb-to-curb pick up, physical help of seniors to get into vans or cars, and communication methods for seniors from other countries; and
- Provide technical assistance to communities that want to develop their own senior transportation programs.

Demonstration Grants

A committee within NTAC comprised of providers, planners, academicians, and consumers interested and knowledgeable about senior transportation issues will be established to award planning and direct service transportation demonstration project grants. In addition to funding model programs providing direct services, the funding will be used to support fact-finding, data collection and analysis, community wide information sharing and consensus building activities, and action plan development. NTAC will provide selected communities with demonstration grants for the purpose of creating a partnership of community stakeholders, and demonstrating effective mechanisms for establishing community-based plans for senior transportation. These planning grants will:

- Support communities in evaluating the current state of senior transportation;
- Recognize barriers to mobility that seniors encounter in their communities;
- Promote coordination among public, not-for-profit, and for-profit providers of senior transportation services;
- Identify future needs of seniors within those local communities; and
- Establish strategies to meet the unique needs of healthy or frail seniors.

Eligible applicants of the demonstration grants will include, but are not limited to, local transportation organizations, state government agencies, local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, tribal entities and institutions of higher learning.

Government Funding

A \$5 million dollar appropriation is needed to provide mass transportation assistance to help make available adequate and appropriate transportation

for seniors. Of this amount, \$2.5 million dollars would be awarded by contract to a national nonprofit that has significant experience in planning and developing policy for senior services with specific experience in senior transportation policy and programming, and the demonstrated capacity to carry out the responsibilities of NTAC. The remaining \$2.5 million would be used for demonstration grants allocated by NTAC.

AMENDMENT LANGUAGE

Of the amounts made available under paragraph ___ of this subsection, the Secretary shall make available at least \$5,000,000 to provide senior transportation-related technical assistance, demonstration programs, research, public education, and other activities the Secretary considers appropriate to help senior transportation providers. To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall carry out this paragraph through a contract with a national nonprofit organization serving the needs of seniors that has demonstrated capacity to carry out the activities.

CONFERENCE REPORT LANGUAGE (If needed)

Within the funds appropriated for transit planning and research (within the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Planning and Research Account) -- \$5,000,000 is provided to a national nonprofit agency with significant experience in planning and developing policy for senior transportation services -- \$2,500,000 to support a national senior transportation resource and technical assistance center and \$2,500,000 to be utilized for planning and direct service senior transportation demonstration project grants for appropriate not-for-profit providers, state and local government agencies, academic institutions, and tribal entities.

COMMITTEE REPORT LANGUAGE (If still applicable)

The Committee recognizes the importance of establishing a national technical assistance center or clearinghouse to improve access to transportation services for senior citizens. With the exploding senior population between now and 2030, there is a compelling need for compiling and sharing "best practices" and information relating to the planning need for community coordination of transportation services for seniors and highlighting effective model programs of direct service delivery. A national technical assistance center shall be established to maintain a central repository of data in order to collect, prepare, analyze, and disseminate information and statistics and analysis relating to the transportation needs for seniors. The national technical assistance center shall include a committee comprised of providers, planner, academicians, and consumers interested and knowledgeable about senior transportation issues with the committee to award planning and direct service transportation demonstration project grants to appropriate not-for-profit organizations serving seniors, state or local government agencies, tribal entities and intuitions of higher education.

From the funds appropriated for the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Planning and Research account, the FTA shall award a grant for the establishment and

maintenance of a national technical assistance center to a national not-for-profit organization that focuses significantly on serving the needs of the elderly population, has demonstrated knowledge and expertise in senior transportation policy and planning issues, has affiliates in a majority of the states, has the capacity to convene local groups for the purpose of consulting on operation and development of senior transportation programs, and has close working relationships with the Federal Transit Administration and the Administration on Aging.

The Committee recommends that \$2,500,000 dollars be made available to the National Technical Assistance Center to support such a national technical assistance center. The committee further recommends that an additional \$2,500,000 be made available to the National Technical Assistance Center to award demonstration project grants, half to help coordinate senior transportation services provided by government, not-for-profit, and for-profit providers, and half for direct services to develop model transportation programs serving seniors.